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R.I.P. Ruth Bader Ginsburg: Feminist Icon and Equal Rights Advocate

Posted on [September 26, 2020](#) by [Simone Snaith](#)



Image via Oyez.org

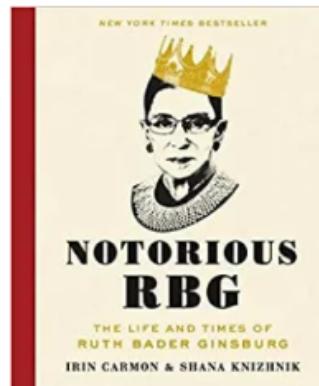
Co-written with Casey Lewis

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you." – Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died at age 87 on September 18, 2020 in Washington, D.C. due to complications brought on by metastatic pancreatic cancer. The mourning of the tiny, but fierce judge is a nationwide affair, as she was a beloved advocate for gender equality and workers' rights, and even a [pop culture icon](#) known as "[The Notorious RBG](#)." Many Los Angelenos paid their respects at the one-day [Skirball Memorial](#) to Ginsburg on Friday, Sept. 25, where they were able to leave flowers, letters, photos, and other tributes.

Justice Ginsburg believed our nation's success depended on a clear separation of church and state, gender-blind laws, and the Supreme Court's cautious, moderate and restrained interpretation of the constitution. In 1999, the American Bar Association presented her with its Thurgood Marshall Award for her efforts to improve gender equality and civil rights in the United States. Justice Ginsburg also had a close relationship with the American Civil Liberties Union: she helped launch the organization in 1971 and directed the Women's Rights Project throughout the '70s. She served as General Counsel from 1973-80 and as a member of the National Board of Directors from 1974-80. As General Counsel, she argued [six landmark gender equality cases](#) in front of SCOTUS.

Appointed to the Supreme Court by President Bill Clinton in 1993, she didn't miss a single day of SCOTUS oral arguments until 2018, even while living through multiple cancer treatments and surgeries as well as her husband's death in 2010. She was the first female member of the Harvard Law Review, first female tenured professor at Columbia, and is first female and second ever Supreme Court justice to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol. She inspires so many Americans not only for her vast success in a male-dominated field, but more importantly for carrying and uplifting other women along her path.



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Amid our concerns about how the Trump administration will rush to replace her, we can look back on her fascinating life and career:

Justice Ginsburg was born on March 15, 1933 in Brooklyn, NY. She experienced a low-income working class upbringing and her mother passed away the day before she graduated high school. Due to her mother's fierce encouragement, Justice Ginsburg completed an impressive academic career. After graduating from James Madison High School (Brooklyn, NY) she enrolled at Cornell University and graduated first in her class in 1954 with a Bachelor of Arts in Government. Not long after welcoming her first child, she enrolled at Harvard Law as one of nine women in a class of five-hundred students and became a member of the Harvard Law Review. Eventually her husband Martin accepted a job in New York City, so with one year left in her schooling she transferred from Harvard to Columbia Law where she also became a member of the law review. In 1959, she completed her LL.B, graduating first in her class.

Despite her accolades and success at Columbia, Justice Ginsburg had a difficult time securing a job. Eventually a former professor referred her to U.S. District Court Judge Edmund L. Palmiere of the Southern District of New York. She clerked for Judge Palmiere from 1959-61 until she left to Sweden to work on the Columbia Project on International Civil Procedure for two years. Upon her return to the United States, she held teaching positions at Rutgers University Law School (1963-72) and Columbia University (1972-80). From 1977-78 she completed a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Stanford, CA, and in 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed her to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia where she served until '93.

Justice Ginsburg authored a single book: "[My Own Words](#)" (Simon & Schuster, 2016), a collection of her personal writings going back to her pre-teen years. Directors Julie Cohen and Betsy West released "[RBG](#)" in 2018, a biographical documentary of her journey from the life of a working class Brooklyn kid to that of a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

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